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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHATS

February 2, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

SUBJECT: "Modern Rural Housekeeping." Information from Illinois and Arizona Extension Services

PUBLICATION AVAILABLE: Farmers' Bulletin 1471-F, "Home Canning."

I wonder if you can remember the typical articles and the stories in the women's magazines of 20 and 25 years ago. Remember the strong, silent heroes, the sweet, womanly heroines, the pious, well-mannered (and just a little bit anemic) children of the stories?

I was remembering the articles, though, yesterday. Especially those articles about the dreadful drudgery and appalling loneliness of the life led by the farm housewife. Twenty-five years ago, if you remember, was just after President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission had made its report showing how the march of science had passed by most farm homes, and many farms.

Well, the reason I remembered those articles and that report was that I had just been reading accounts of the work of some organizations of rural homemakers today in the annual reports of the home demonstration agents for their counties. As I read those reports I told myself that the days pictured by the Country Life Commission and the articles in the women's magazines certainly had gone forever. I believe you'll agree with me after I tell you something about these reports -- and perhaps you'll find as I did in these true stories some pointers for our own jobs of homemaking.

One of these reports was from Santa Cruz County, Arizona. It told about a kind of social function new to me----a Tin Can Picnic.

Here's how the Arizona women have a tin can picnic. I'm quoting from the report of the Santa Cruz County Home Demonstration Agent:

"We invite all the neighbors to come to the home of one member of the home bureau. Each woman brings some dish for a simple lunch. She also brings the foods she wants to can. We have pressure cookers ready so the women attending can put up several different foods if they wish, during the day.

"A good example was the Tin Can Picnic held at the home of Mrs. R. H. Ellis at San Raphael. Ladies came from Patagonia, Canille, Parker Canyon, and Lochiel, which represents a mileage of from five to 25 miles. Two stoves, three pressure cookers, and an abundance of pots and pans were ready. On this particular day, seven rabbits, six old hens, a wagon load of field corn, and one bushel of tomatoes were canned.

Well, that doesn't sound much like isolated farm housewives does it? After all, I honestly believe we'd find the old fashioned sewing bee or the modern tin can picnic more fun than bridge once in a while. You work with your hands and

vocal cords either at bridges or sewing bees, but the results of the bees are so much more tangible!

Well, to get on with our story of the Arizona tin can picnics, I want to read you this comment from the home demonstration agent who planned the picnics:

"In looking over the records of the year it is noticeable how the canning of fruits has decreased and the canning of vegetables and meats increased. It has meant much to the ranchers to can a cow which is worth little on foot, but which would cost much more if purchased over the counter in small cuts. Tin cans have been used extensively for the canning of meat. The sealer and pressure cookers are borrowed for the day's work and when there is sufficient help, 100 quart cans of beef is a good day's work. Pork isn't as plentiful in this section, but we have reports from Mrs. Benjamin, Mrs. Honnas, and Mrs. Buck that they have canned 50 cans each. Venison, chicken and rabbit have been canned in most communities." (That's the end of the quotation from the Arizona home demonstration agent's report).

By the way, this agent notes that she is giving all the Arizona housewives who are canning meats copies of Farmers' Bulletin 1471 on "Home Canning". This bulletin doesn't give time tables for processing meats, but it does give good canning methods and describes equipment. The Bureau of Home Economics has prepared mimeographed circulars containing the special directions necessary for canning beef, veal, mutton, lamb and chicken. Any of you wanting to put up any kind of meat can get Farmers' Bulletin 1471 and the mimeographed circulars that supplement it by writing to me.

Now let's go to another home demonstration agent's report. This one is from Rock Island County, Illinois. In that county home bureau members are applying scientific principles to planning the work of homemaking. But we'll let the home demonstration agent tell the story:

(I'm quoting now from her report) "Home Bureau members in Rock Island County, Illinois, are studying the home management project this year. As part of the project they are making time management studies. These studies involve keeping either a record of time spent in household tasks, or a written list of the jobs in the work of an average day with the approximate time alloted to each.

"The women have found, in general, that since their work is so well planned they have more time for family association, the training of the children, personal improvement, recreation, and so on. They waste less time and do less 'puttering.' They are able to accomplish the day's duties with less physical exhaustion, for the schedule provides rest periods during the day. They have learned that a housewife can find other ways of avoiding fatigue if she will do a little constructive thinking. For example, one woman has learned from her study that it is easier for her to do part of the weekly cleaning on one day and part on another instead of doing it all at one time.

"The time management studies have also helped our people reduce nervous tension and mental fatigue. They find that when they plan the house work well and follow the plan their day is not cluttered up with unessential tasks. Just the necessary, important duties are done. Mrs. Sharp puts it like this: "A schedule is a means of keeping ahead of the work and not letting the work get

ahead of you."

"Mrs. Blanchard has learned to save 15 minutes after each meal by draining the dishes instead of wiping them. This extra 45 minutes each day means much to the mother -- and she also notices that the children do not object one bit to this method of dishwashing.

"Mrs. Cox reports that time studies make her do the things she knew about before, but just simply didn't do. Things like cutting out unnecessary motions in the use of equipment, and having a definite place for each piece and always keeping it there. Mr. Cox says he doesn't mind helping with the housework now, for he knows that the pans and spoons will always be in the same places. In fact, Mrs. Denby says, that keeping a schedule is exactly like that -- having a place for things and then keeping everything in its place.

"Then, Mrs. Williamson finds added interest in each day's work since she went on a schedule. As she begins in the morning, she wonders which will get through first, she or the clock. Isn't that a thought----making a game of housework?

"One member of our home bureau schedules even the details of events that occur in the home only occasionally -- a Thanksgiving dinner, an organization meeting, or a party for the children. She says that a written schedule means that things on paper are off one's mind. Thus, she does away with a lot of worry and last-minute rush.

"Of course the women have discovered that a schedule for house work does not always include the unusual interruptions that forever disturb a homemaker's daily activity. But the ideal schedule is elastic enough to give some room for interruptions.

"To sum it up, I have this impression of our experience in schedule making and keeping:

"The use of the time study is not a remedy for all family ills, but its results are gratifying. Schedule keeping seems to assist in making easier the difficult duties of the homemaker, eliminating drudgery, and reducing fatigue in housework, making sure that important jobs get done before the unimportant ones, making home duties more interesting and elevating the homemaker's job to professional standing."

Wednesday: "A Wardrobe for the Baby."